



FLO Direct News

A Newsletter Supporting Diplomatic Families from the Family Liaison Office

Summer 2009

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FLO's Commitment to One and All

FLO is the Department's primary office for issues affecting employees and family members serving under Chief of Mission authority. We serve and advocate for employees from many agencies, married and single, their family members, and Members of Household. As part of our outreach efforts and continued commitment to all the demographics we serve, we encourage you to take the time to read this newsletter.

In this issue, you will learn more about how FLO advocates for you and the programs, services, and activities that are made available as a result of our findings and your great feedback. Follow our FLO staff around the world and watch them in action on BNET. Log on to our Internet and Intranet sites to see what's new. Join FLO's Unaccompanied Tours reading group. Read how FLO's Professional Development Fellowships provide family members with support for their careers. Learn more about emergency preparation and how the worldwide Community Liaison Office (CLO) program shares your interests and can enhance your life at post.

Whether you are serving overseas or back home in the U.S., FLO is here for you to voice your concerns regarding unaccompanied tours, family member employment, expeditious naturalization services, education and youth issues, crisis management and support services, transition to the U.S. and community liaison overseas. Contact us and tell us about those things that affect you as an employee, married or single, family member or Member of Household. On page 11, you will find our main email address, FLO@state.gov, along with other contact and reference information. Best wishes for the rest of the summer season.

- Leslie Brant Teixeira, Director of FLO

What's New in FLO?

This quarter, members of FLO travelled far and wide to hear your concerns, advocated for your interests on panels and workshops here at home, and responded with solutions and suggestions.

Up, Up, and Away

Last April, FLO's Unaccompanied Tours (UT) Officer visited Baghdad, Kabul, Cairo, Amman, and London where she met with senior post management, employees, and family members to gain a better understanding of what FLO and the Department can do to address the needs of those serving at or separated from loved ones serving at unaccompanied posts. The information gained from this trip helped FLO assess and evaluate current programs and explore new approaches to providing support to employees and family members. For suggestions, tips from the field, information, articles, and upcoming events, please visit FLO Unaccompanied Tours online at: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c14521.htm.



FLO's Unaccompanied Tour Officer
Bridget Roddy on a C-130 aircraft
in Baghdad

Special Education Overseas

In May, members from FLO's Education and Youth and Crisis Management portfolios participated in a Special Education Overseas workshop sponsored by the Transition Center titled, *Advocating for Your Child with Special Needs*. FLO shared resources on the Department's overseas special education support system, agency and office contacts, and strategies from parents with similar concerns. OpenNet account users who would like to view the entire 2009 Special Education Overseas Workshop should logon to BNET at <http://bnet.state.gov/clipSearchResults.asp>. Additional information on special needs, talking with teachers, and advocating for your child are available on FLO's Education and Youth Internet sites at: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c22000.htm.

Members of Household

Shortly before the Department issued the new same-sex domestic partner policy, FLO staff joined Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA) and the Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center in the Department's first workshop for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees. Sponsored by the Transition Center and designed for employees whose partners wished to become Eligible Family Members (EFMs), this workshop addressed challenges faced by LGBT and their families overseas. FLO will soon launch a Member of Household webpage with individual post policies, sample declaration forms, visa requirements by country on the Intranet at: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hrweb/flo/moh/index.cfm>. Stay tuned! If you need assistance now, please contact a member of FLO's Crisis Management and Support Staff at (202)647-1076, or send an email to FLO@state.gov for general questions. Same-sex domestic partners are now Eligible Family Members, but FLO continues to support and advocate for all Members of Household.

FLO on the Road

Last month, FLO took its message of advocacy, programs, and services to the Foreign Service Institute for a *FLO on the Road* outreach event. Armed with FLO publications, information on Department resources, and with our specialized staff in tow, we answered questions and provided information to employees and family members about employment and training opportunities, education options, unaccompanied tours, expeditious naturalization for foreign born spouses, evacuation and more.

July 2009 FLO on the Road Outreach Event at FSI



FLO is always reaching out to provide resources and referrals that allow families make informed decisions. We encourage you to visit our Internet sites often, and see what's new at: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo. Call or contact us at (202)647-1076 or FLO@state.gov with your concerns, questions, and comments. We will be sure to answer each and every email in a timely fashion.

FLO's Unaccompanied Tours Office is Making a Movie! (Kind of)

We are creating a series of short video clips to appear on our internet site to help answer some questions about unaccompanied tours. Employees and family members (spouses, partners, parents, siblings, and children) are invited to participate. If you are getting ready to go – perfect, you can share how you chose to bid on this assignment. If you are on R&R—great, tell people how the tour is going. If your assignment is over - outstanding, you can really answer our questions.

Taping is scheduled for this Fall in Washington, DC.

Each person (families/couples/groups welcome) will be filmed for 15-30 minutes answering a set of questions. You will be provided with the questions well in advance to assure taping goes smoothly. Names will not appear on the website.

Surprise your family...

Appear on the Unaccompanied Tours website!

Please call 202-647-1076 or e-mail us at FLOaskUT@state.gov if you are interested in participating.

FLO Offers Unaccompanied Tours Tips from the Field Online

For community members considering an unaccompanied tour or preparing for one, be sure to log on to UT's new site entirely devoted to helpful strategies related to unaccompanied tours at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/124685.htm. Here are a few tidbits of what you will find:

Ready, steady, go!

Are your kids ready to help the family prepare for the unexpected?



FEMA READY KIDS



Your family can use this website to create a plan that will help you get ready for many different kinds of unexpected situations. The *Ready Kids* www.ready.gov/kids/home.html web site features step-by-step instructions on what families can do to be better prepared and the role kids can play in this effort. (Geared towards 4-5th grades)

Talk to me

Open, frequent, and honest **communication** is essential for maintaining your relationships while separated – be it from a spouse or partner, a child, a parent, sibling or friend. Take the communication quiz and read articles here: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Communication-Style-Quiz&id=97457>.

Let go and grow

Take care of what you can and learn to let go of the rest. Those deep breaths will come in handy... INHALE... (HOLD)...EXHALE...similar tips in [quotes from the Dalai Lama](#).

Readers Unite!

FLO UT recently started a book club for the UT community. Here are some of the titles that we suggest and others our readers have enjoyed that take place in some of our unaccompanied posts. We hope your communities (UT or not) will enjoy them as well.

Swallows of Kabul by Yasmina Khadra



Everyone should read this book! Beautifully written, this short book is a descent into a world of "fever and fear." It was written by Algerian army officer, Mohamed Moulesse-houl, under the pseudonym "Yasmina Khadra" and was a best seller in France. The book follows the lives of four characters and their struggles under Taliban rule. Good book, good descriptions of Kabul - well worth reading.

In Other Room, Other Wonders by Daniyal Mueenuddin

The epigraph to *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* is a Punjabi proverb: "Three things for which we kill -- Land, women and gold." In this book of linked short stories we learn about the Harounis, a rich Pakistani family. Interesting book - well written, rich with descriptions of Pakistani life.



Finding Nouf by Zoë Ferraris



The author's knowledge of Saudi Arabia greatly enhances this modern day mystery. Nouf, the 16 year old daughter of the wealthy Shrawi family, has gone missing. Nayir ash-Sharqui, a Palestinian-born but raised in Saudi Arabia friend of the family, has been commissioned to find her. Nouf's dead body is found in the desert - was she murdered, did she run away, or was she kidnapped? Nayir must team up with Katya Hijazi in order to solve this mystery and his very strict Muslim sense of modesty is put to the test. Good book - very interesting perspective of Saudi Arabia.

Don't forget to share your tips at FLOaskUT@state.gov. We'd love to hear from you!

FLO'S 2009 Professional Development Fellowship Program: Creating Career-Enhancing Opportunities for Family Members

Since the establishment of the Family Liaison Office (FLO) in 1978, family member employment has been a major component of FLO's advocacy portfolio. In the May issue of State Magazine, the article "Jobs Wanted" detailed the challenges that family members face as they try to find meaningful employment overseas or alternatively, try to continue in the career paths that they established for themselves prior to joining the Foreign Service lifestyle. Both scenarios present enormous challenges as this article illustrated.

Based on statistics presented in FLO's 2009 "Worldwide Family Member Employment Overview," close to 10,000 adult family members accompany a U.S. Direct Hire employee on his/her overseas assignment. Of this total, nearly two-thirds expressed an interest in working, while only a third was successful in finding employment. These percentages have remained fairly constant the last several years and as a result, have provided more than ample fuel for the fire that is FLO's employment advocacy mandate.

As the "Jobs Wanted" article explained, many positions filled by family members inside the Mission tend to be clerical in nature and therefore widely viewed by the approximately 75% of family members with degrees (of whom about half have advanced degrees) as not very challenging or interesting. Given the limited number of inside-the-Mission and outside-the-Mission employment opportunities, FLO has decided to complement employment initiatives with other career-enhancing opportunities for family members.

In 2005, FLO embarked on a pilot project with the support of the Una Chapman Cox Foundation called the "Professional Development Fellowship Program." The project, funded solely by Cox in 2005, solicited grant proposals from family members who wanted to pursue activities to maintain their careers or further their professional development. Funded activities included online coursework, professional licensure/certification maintenance and conference participation. Selectees received grants of up to \$2000, with each grantee contributing a minimum of 25 percent of the proposed project cost. In 2005, 20 family members were awarded Cox fellowships totaling \$19,987.

Fast forward to 2009. After demonstrating great success throughout the three-year pilot phase, the Professional Development Fellowships now function as an independent program of FLO, funded solely through appropriated funds. The program is open to all eligible family member spouses and domestic partners, and member of household unmarried partners from all agencies under Chief of Mission authority. In 2009, family members submitted 195 proposals for consideration – nearly a 10 percent increase over the 2008 tally. Of the 195 applications, 120 were selected and awarded a total of \$197,538 in fellowships. Each proposal reflected the amazing diversity and talent of our family members, as well as their unique set of skills and creativity.

Selectees for the 2009 funding cycle were awarded grants for certifications and licensures in nursing, pharmacy and teaching English as a second language; degree course work in epidemiology, information systems, Industrial and Organizational Psychology and art conservation and

repair. Other awarded proposals included requests to develop writing skills, pursue training in pre- and post-natal yoga instruction, obtain horticultural certification, maintain veterinary skills, attend a conference on tropical medicine and pursue coursework to enhance knowledge of HIV/AIDS.

Admittedly, FLO cannot meet the needs nor satisfy the expectations of every family member who would like to secure meaningful employment, but through unique initiatives like the Professional Development Fellowship program, FLO is making headway. Consider these quotes from 2009 fellowship applicants:

“Regardless of the outcome of my individual application, I truly appreciate such opportunities as afforded by FLO to EFMs and MOHs and wish to express my thanks for the excellent services FLO provides and its multifaceted and visionary approach to assisting Foreign Service families.”

“I can’t tell you how much I appreciate the grant! The cost of living here...is very high and the course I am taking is very expensive. As I am not earning income here, it means a lot to ‘earn’ the grant as a way to pitch in to the family finances.”

“Thank you so much for this opportunity, this is a wonderful program. I am looking forward to starting a new degree this year and feel privileged to be chosen as a recipient.”

“...I truly appreciate the support that FLO gives its families overseas.”

As a well-known ad campaign of the 1970s famously quoted, “You’ve come a long way baby!” Family members and FLO have come a long way together and with continued commitment, hard work and moxie, we’ll forge ahead into the next decade, creating new opportunities for professional growth.

(Pending funding, the ALDAC announcing FLO’s 2010 Professional Development Fellowship Program should be circulated in later winter/early spring.)

Crisis Management and Support

Transitioning and Emergency Preparation

Transitioning to a new post is a good time to stay prepared for possible emergencies. Crises seem to pop up when we least expect them and impact us twice as hard when we aren’t ready. Be sure to attend RSO briefings and actively participate in Contingency Planning Workshops, organized by your CLO and RSO. FLO’s **Contingency Planning: Don’t Leave Home Without It** has handy checklists and suggestions on how to organize and upload your documents and photos on a USB or flash drive, CD, or portable hard drive <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1991.htm>. During a crisis it is important to have a variety of methods to communicate including a cell phone, BlackBerry, email, or embassy radio.

To help you get ready for a crisis you may want to prepare a version of this 72-Hour Emergency Kit: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hrweb/flo/clo/upload/72-hour-emergency-kit-doc-clo-london-doc-20080318.pdf> and also keep the following information up-to-date and accessible.

Your Contact Information:

- Before going to a new post, Department of State employees should update their contact information with the Employee Service Center by calling (202) 647-3432 or you can email EmployeesServicesCenter@state.gov. The Department's Operations Center (see below) depends on the accuracy of this information to reach out to an employee or family member when there is an emergency back home.
- Provide post HR with emergency contact information for the person(s) you would like contacted back home if the employee or family member becomes seriously ill, injured, or dies while overseas.
- Provide the CLO with the safe haven contact information of where you would go if there was an evacuation.

Emergency Numbers/Email Addresses:

- Keep the embassy switchboard number handy. Knowing the Health Unit, RSO and CLO's extensions are useful.
- Local ambulance phone numbers. (Be aware of payment policy for ambulances and hospitals; some may accept only cash.)

Department of State's Operation Center (Ops Center), telephone: (202) 647-1512, email: SES-O@state.gov. Provide this information to your family to contact you on an emergency basis after U.S. office hours. The Ops Center can connect a family in the U.S. (or at another overseas location) with an employee or family member at post, regardless of agency.

Office of Casualty Assistance (OCA), telephone: (202) 736-4302, email: OCA@state.gov. OCA provides administrative assistance and on-going support to employees and family members affected by critical incidents, including serious injury or death of a loved one. Your family back home can contact OCA during U.S. office hours if they are trying to reach you in case of an emergency.

Community Liaison Office Program**The Community Liaison Office (CLO) Program**

For over 30 years the Community Liaison Office (CLO) program has provided support to U.S. government employees and family members who are assigned to American embassies and consulates abroad. FLO extends its services to overseas communities through the management of the CLO program at 200 missions worldwide, including several unaccompanied posts such as Baghdad and Kabul. The CLO Coordinator position, also known as CLO, is occupied by a U.S. citizen appointment eligible family member of a direct-hire employee assigned to post. The CLO occupies a sensitive Family Member Appointment (FMA) position and requires a Top Secret security clearance.

The CLO is among the first points of contact for newly assigned or arriving employees and family members, and provides pre-arrival information, orientation, and assistance with settling in at post. As soon as you have been assigned, you should contact the CLO at your new post and provide your pending arrival date and ask to be added to the newsletter distribution list. All CLOs have generic

mailboxes and if you do not know the name of the CLO, you can write to:

CLOnameofpost@state.gov, e.g. CLOOuagadougou@state.gov.

The CLO program is charged with building community spirit. CLOs identify the needs of their community and respond with effective programming, information, resources, and referrals. They serve as advocates for employees and family members, advise post management on quality of life issues, and recommend solutions and family-friendly post policies. Their duties are defined in the following eight areas of responsibility:

- Employment Liaison
- Crisis Management and Support
- Education Liaison
- Information and Resource Management
- Guidance and Referral
- Welcoming and Orientation
- Community Liaison
- Events Planning

CLOs are often called the morale officer at post. “Quality of Life” issues related to the Foreign Service lifestyle and the post-specific environment directly affect morale. At posts where employee associations exist and are financially healthy, CLO programs and the community can benefit substantially. Many CLOs, however, receive little or no outside funding and their program relies on self-supporting events or fundraising activities. Unlike military installations, our missions do not have morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) funds. CLOs rely on the volunteer efforts of employees and family members to share their time and their talents to address community needs. Be sure to let the CLO know how you are willing to support the program. You will not only enrich community life, you will also enhance your overseas experience.

CLO of the Year

Each year the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) recognizes three Foreign Service personnel for exemplary performance and extraordinary contributions to professionalism, morale, and effectiveness. FLO congratulates Erica Krug in Harare, the winner of the Avis Bohlen Award for family members and Megan E. Gallardo in Podgorica, winner of the Delavan Award for Office Management Specialists. FLO salutes this year’s M. Juanita Guess Award recipient, CLO Juliana “Lily” Hightower in Addis Ababa, and runners-up Mary Knight (CLO Beirut) and Michelle Destito (former CLO Ankara), as well as all CLOs who were nominated. The award, sponsored by *Clements and Company* was named in honor of President and CEO Jon Clements’ mother, M. Juanita Guess and recognizes outstanding service, leadership, dedication, initiative, and imagination as a Community Liaison Office Coordinator.

This year’s winner, Lily, has served as the CLO Coordinator in Addis Ababa since 2006. She and her former co-CLO were runners-ups for the award last year. Ambassador Yamamoto nominated Lily for the honor again this year noting that she “serves with singular distinction as the focal point for Embassy activities, bringing the community together in time of tragedy, lending support as control officer for VIP visitors and supporting staff development.” He further credits Lily with

improving morale through an innovative, creative and self-sacrificing approach.

Lily received her award and a check for \$2500 at the AFSA presentation on June 18th in the Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room. FLO toasted her achievement with a small reception before the awards ceremony, attended by several of Lily's colleagues and friends including Mr. Clements, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources, Teddy Taylor, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Phillip Carter, other department officials and FLO staff.

FLO thanks AFSA for recognizing the contributions of the CLO Program and gives special thanks to Jon Clements of Clements and Company for sponsoring this award.

By honoring Lily's contributions, we also honor and recognize all members of the CLO Corps as integral mission employees around the world.

Congratulations to Lily and everyone who works with the CLO program.



2009 CLO of the Year Juliana "Lily" Hightower, (second from right) joined by (from l-r) FLO's CLO Program Manager Lycia Coble Sibilla, Jon Clements from Clements and Company, Bureau of Human Resources Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Teddy Taylor, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa Phillip Carter

FLO Online Resources

FLO on the Internet

www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo

FLO on the Intranet

<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hrweb/flo/index.cfm>

FLO strives to put as many of our resources materials on the Internet for your easy access. If you cannot find what you are looking for or experience technical difficulty, please email FLO at: FLO@state.gov. You may also contact us at (202) 647-1076 or (800) 440-0397.

FLO Websites provide information on:

[Family Member Employment](#)

[Education and Youth](#)

[Crisis Management](#)

[Support Services](#)

[Unaccompanied Tours Support](#)

[Expeditious Naturalization](#)

[Transition](#)

FLO Publications (including *FLO Direct News!*)

[The Community Liaison Office Program](#)

Questions?

For general questions: FLO@state.gov

For Education and Youth: FLOAskEducation@state.gov

For Employment: FLOAskEmployment@state.gov

For Evacuation Support: FLOAskEvacuations@state.gov

For Unaccompanied Tours: FLOAskUT@state.gov

For Expeditious Naturalization: FLOAskNaturalization@state.gov

For Family Member Training: FLOAskTraining@state.gov